

vision that takes its inspiration from the Founding Fathers of our great Nation, Founders who declared our independence, fought a revolution against government tyranny, and then after 4 months of heated debate and honorable compromise crafted a sacred document that is still revered 211 years later. The Constitution of the United States is the document that guides us all, Democrats and Republicans, through this ongoing experiment in Democratic self-government.

Let us agree, all of us on both sides of the aisle, that we share a common vision that America stands for liberty and the freedom to pursue our dreams from sea to shining sea. And may God bless America.

GROWING COMMUNITIES HELP WITH SCHOOL CONSTRUCTION

(Mr. ETHERIDGE asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. ETHERIDGE. Mr. Speaker, I rise today to urge my colleagues to pass legislation to assist States and local communities meeting their need to build new schools, reduce overcrowding and improve good discipline and quality instruction.

Yesterday, the number crunchers at the Census Bureau confirmed what many of us already know, communities across America are growing with leaps and bounds. For example, in Wake County, one of my counties in my district, it grew by 29.4 percent from 1990 to 1997. That is an additional 125,000-plus people. Likewise, another county, Johnston County, has grown by more than 25 percent during that same period.

This tremendous growth places a heavy burden on our communities to build schools to teach our children. The result is that we have children attending schools in trailers and in dilapidated buildings. The Secretary of Education has projected an explosion of growth in the school age population in the years to come in every State in this country.

The baby boom echo is now upon us. It is up to Congress to move and act. Children do not care who funds build-ings. They want them funded.

KYOTO TREATY OF CLIMATE CHANGE

(Mr. KNOLLENBERG asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KNOLLENBERG. Mr. Speaker, as a member of the oversight delegation that attended the negotiations over the U.N. treaty on climate change, I am absolutely outraged by U.N. official Raul Estrada's comments about congressional opposition to the overreaching Kyoto Accord.

As I mentioned yesterday, Mr. Estrada and the rest of the world need

to understand that, as representatives of the United States, our first obligation is to protect America's interests. The Kyoto treaty places the entire burden of reducing greenhouse gas emissions on developed nations and most particularly the United States, while giving developing nations like China, India, Mexico and Brazil a free pass. This would impose unrealistic burdens on the American people and significantly lower the standard of living of our country. Make no mistake about it, if this treaty goes through, we will lose jobs and our citizens will pay more for goods and services.

Mr. Speaker, while the rest of the world may have an interest in seeing America's economy suffer, we do not. I urge my colleagues to remain firm in their opposition to the Kyoto treaty on climate change.

TRUST BUT VERIFY

(Mr. TRAFICANT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. TRAFICANT. Mr. Speaker, 2 years ago the White House told China, If you promise to stop selling missiles to terrorist nations, we will give you most favored nation trade status; and China said, Good, that's great. Okay.

Last year the White House said, Look, you are breaking your promise, China; you are selling missiles to Iran and Iraq. Come on. They said, Okay, you are right. This time we will stop.

This year the White House has just announced that they are going to share our nuclear technology programs with China because China has promised to stop this madness, and they said this time China really means it.

Beam me up. These are not promises; these are lies. I would like to say one thing. Somebody is inhaling over at the White House with this program with China. We are financing the biggest national security threat in our history, Mr. Speaker. I think Ronald Reagan's words "trust but verify" should be taken to heart in this Congress.

APRIL 15 TAX FILING DEADLINE

(Mr. CHABOT asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. CHABOT. Mr. Speaker, while millions of Americans took time out last Sunday night to either defend or condemn the President's job interviewing techniques, the clock kept right on ticking towards that April 15 deadline. That is right, Mr. Speaker, I am talking about the April 15 tax filing deadline, a National day of reckoning for taxpayers across the Nation.

Most Americans tend to put off their tax filing because it is such an unpleasant task. Do my colleagues realize that Tax Freedom Day this year is May 9, which means that everything they earn until May 9 goes to Washington and

only after that are they entitled to the fruits of their labor?

The Tax Code is so complex that millions of Americans need to pay for professional help just to figure out how much they owe. Mr. Speaker, Washington is giving the taxpayers of this Nation a lousy deal. Washington wastes too much of the taxpayers' money and then adds insult to injury by making it almost impossible to figure out how much this Government is going to fleece them for. It is taxpayer abuse, plain and simple.

CAMPAIGN FINANCE REFORM

(Mr. DAVIS of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. DAVIS of Florida. Mr. Speaker, as the recent report of the Thompson Senate Committee demonstrates, there is widespread and serious abuse of our Nation's campaign finance system on both sides.

One of the most rapidly growing excesses is that of soft money, unlimited amounts of money people can contribute to either political party. And the other is the incredible proliferation of advertising by outside third-party groups.

That is why a substantial portion of the Democratic freshmen in this House, together with Members of the Republican freshmen class, have filed a bill calling for a ban on soft money and mandating disclosure with respect to these outside third-party ads.

The Speaker said the House will soon take up campaign finance reform. Mr. Speaker, an increasing number of American citizens are watching closely to see whether we take this issue seriously and whether we are going to do something about it. When we take up campaign finance reform; let us take up a real bill, let us take up one that bans soft money; let us take up one that forces disclosure with respect to these ads by outside third-party groups.

KYOTO CLIMATE TREATY

(Mr. GIBBONS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. GIBBONS. Mr. Speaker, my father used to tell me that "if it ain't broke, don't fix it." Will our Federal Government ever get it right? Unfortunately, the Kyoto climate treaty tries not only to fix something that is not broken, it fails miserably to do what its supporters say it will do.

Despite the lack of concrete scientific evidence today of the existence of global warming, this President is more than willing to put millions of American jobs at risk by signing the ill-conceived treaty. Entering into this agreement will cause unemployment to rise, prices to rise, American productivity to decline, and the American economy to be less competitive in the

world market. Even the Wall Street Journal calls the Kyoto agreement the equivalent of a \$100- to \$200-billion-dollar-a-year tax increase.

At a time when our economy is booming, interest rates are down, and more people are working than ever, it is irresponsible to jeopardize this by entering the United States into this treaty. This treaty is bad for America. It is bad for Americans.

H.R. 2183 CLOSES SOFT MONEY LOOPHOLE

(Mr. BERRY asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute.)

Mr. BERRY. Mr. Speaker, the Thompson report released last week has confirmed what we all know, that the integrity of our political system has been undermined by the influence of soft money. The soft money loophole is the primary culprit for the abuses that Congress has spent millions of dollars to investigate.

Through the soft money loophole, a single donor can give unlimited amounts of money to influence Federal elections. Soft money circumvents nearly a century of campaign finance law. It has effectively deregulated our campaign finance system with disastrous results.

The freshmen wanted to fix the main abuses of the current system. We put differences aside and created a fair, bipartisan campaign finance reform bill, H.R. 2183, the Bipartisan Campaign Integrity Act. H.R. 2183 closes the soft money loophole. It gets elected officials out of the business of raising \$1 million special interest contributions. H.R. 2183 is fair. It is bipartisan. The bill has strong bipartisan support from both sides of the aisle.

Mr. Speaker, the freshmen bill must be allowed to come to the House floor without any poison pills.

Mr. Speaker, the freshmen deserve a vote. We have worked hard to create a fair and honest bill. Your decision now to allow a clean vote on the freshman bill will prove to the American people that Congress does care about restoring integrity to the political process.

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SOYBEAN FUEL CAN REDUCE DEPENDENCE ON FOREIGN OIL

(Mr. SHIMKUS asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. SHIMKUS. Mr. Speaker, I rise to recognize the hardworking men and women that are in town this week for the American Soybean Association's annual conference. Earlier this week I had the opportunity to speak at the conference and bring them up to date on legislation I have introduced on their behalf.

As many in this Chamber know, after the Gulf War, Congress acted to reduce

our national dependence on foreign oil by enacting the Energy and Policy Act of 1992. This statute requires State and Federal vehicle fleets to use expensive alternative fuels and technologies in order to reduce its oil dependency.

Unfortunately biodiesel, a fuel derived from soybeans, was not included in the list of fuels that fleet managers could use to comply with this Federal mandate, largely because the fuel was still being tested and developed.

My bill, H.R. 2568, the Energy Policy Amendments Act of 1997, which has 55 cosponsors, will allow biodiesel to be used in diesel engines across the Nation to reduce harmful emissions, clean our air, and increase the demand for soybeans, all at a reduced cost when compared to traditional alternative fuel technologies.

Mr. Speaker, biodiesel is just one example of a good clean air policy.

MEDICARE EXPANSION

(Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. JACKSON-LEE of Texas. Mr. Speaker, I am here to announce that the Democratic Caucus stands for the do-something Congress and we are going to lead this Congress to do something for the American people. That is why I am very proud that we have recognized that there are those Americans who do not have health insurance, hardworking Americans, 55 years to under 65 years, who for a long time have worked in their community, worked very hard, but for some reason have fallen upon hard times. Maybe they have lost their job, maybe they are suffering from heart disease, strokes and cancer which falls highly among people from 45 to 54.

This bill that the Democratic Caucus is supporting along with the President of the United States is very fair and reasonable and rational and it makes a lot of good sense. That is, to allow those aged 55 to 65 to buy into insurance, particularly the Medicare insurance. It allows those individuals to pay no more than 125 percent.

Why do we need that? Just last year we passed a portability bill where you could pass your insurance on once you moved to another employer. That does not work. We need to have this bill.

A REPUBLICAN VIEW OF MEDICARE EXPANSION

(Mr. KINGSTON asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. KINGSTON. Mr. Speaker, last year 67-year-old Sarah Rutherford of Brunswick, Georgia was very distraught about her health care, because she knew that in April 1995 the Clinton Medicare trustees said Medicare was going to go bankrupt if we did not do anything about it. After many strug-

gles in Congress we finally passed a bipartisan bill that cut down on Medicare fraud, gave seniors more choices, and increased spending on Medicare for people like Ms. Rutherford from \$5,000 to \$7,000. Most importantly it created a bipartisan tax force to look at Medicare not just for the next election but for the next generation, to correct Medicare for the next 5 or 10 years. This bipartisan commission is working and working very hard.

Now in an apparent desperation attempt to get the focus off the White House, the President has come up with a new entitlement on Medicare to say, and listen to this, in his own words, he will be qualified for Medicare in 3 or 4 years. When the President of the United States retires, he will be able to go on Medicare.

I say, "Mr. President, go ahead and retire, but stay away from Ms. Rutherford's Medicare."

A DEMOCRATIC VIEW OF MEDICARE EXPANSION

(Ms. DELAURO asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend her remarks.)

Ms. DELAURO. Mr. Speaker, Americans nearing retiring age are one of the most uninsured populations because in fact they have less access to and they are at greater risk of losing employer-based health insurance. There are 30,000 such folks in my State of Connecticut alone. I might add that the group that is particularly at risk are women who are between 62 and 64 years old, lacking health insurance, nearing retirement, not at 65 yet, not eligible yet for Medicare.

This is only going to get worse, Mr. Speaker, as baby boomers near retirement. Democrats do have a proposal to expand that access to health care to Americans between 55 and 64. It would provide the opportunity to buy into the Medicare program, to pay the premium, to pay a cost in order to get the access to that kind of coverage. It does not draw on the Medicare trust fund resources needed to provide care to those who are over 65. This Congress has a responsibility to address this growing problem. Let us have the Republican leadership follow the Democrats.

REJECT THE GLOBAL WARMING TREATY

(Mr. WELDON of Florida asked and was given permission to address the House for 1 minute and to revise and extend his remarks.)

Mr. WELDON of Florida. Mr. Speaker, is it fair to let some of our fastest growing competitors like China, Mexico and India have an advantage? That is what the U.N. Climate Treaty will do. The President still vows to sign it. This flawed treaty will force the U.S. to commit to emissions reductions that will put Americans on a strict energy diet, a more than 30 percent cutback in